



UMBRELLA REFUGEE COMMITTEE

Refugee-led Mobile Patrols

Report Q1 - 2026



1. About

The Umbrella Refugee Committee's (URC) refugee-led mobile patrols project is funded in 2026 by UNHCR's Refugee-Led Innovation Fund. With this initiative, the URC connects asylum-seekers, refugees and other migrants experiencing homelessness in Brussels with essential service information, community support, and trusted human connection. Our volunteers combine lived experience of forced displacement, knowledge of complex asylum procedures, language skills, and community-to-community outreach to support those most isolated and excluded.

2. Summary / Qualitative Observations

During the first quarter of 2026, we conducted only three outreach patrols. This low number is because we needed these first months to establish a coordination system, a plan of action, develop an onboarding and training system for new volunteers, test our outreach approach, and identify where forcibly displaced people are often located. We also used this time to build stronger relations with other actors doing street patrols / outreach, data collection and first-line aid.

These three patrols took place in Brussels around Schuman, Gare du Midi, and the Humanitarian Hub. We distributed warm clothes and winter gear that we had collected, as well as hot tea, and service referral / information. The patrols highlighted the importance of adapting locations and timing. Some areas had relatively few forcibly displaced people (e.g. the metro stations in the European Quarter), while others, such as near Gare du Midi, were predominantly occupied by homeless individuals in irregular situations, including large groups of Moroccan men. At times, these locations and publics presented some safety concerns and frequent substance use, making meaningful engagement more difficult and suggesting that they may not be priority outreach locations for our team.

Among the people we did engage, we encountered several asylum-seekers, including individuals in the Dublin procedure and others awaiting decisions on their applications. Conversations often revealed confusion about asylum procedures and available services. Common needs included shelter, tents, warm clothing, legal information, and opportunities for social participation.

The first patrols also generated several operational lessons. Smaller patrol teams enabled deeper conversations, while patrols later in the evening (6–8 pm) coincided with increased substance use and reduced engagement opportunities. Volunteers identified the need for clearer patrol leader training, stronger safety protocols, improved briefing and debriefing procedures, updated multilingual flyers, and better distribution of relief items. Practical improvements included carrying hygiene supplies, offering hot drinks (with coffee often preferred over tea), dividing supplies into smaller bags, avoiding waking people who were sleeping, and conducting debriefs away from outreach locations.

Overall, the first quarter served as an important learning phase, helping us refine both our outreach methodology and volunteer coordination while identifying key trends and service gaps among people experiencing homelessness and displacement in Brussels.

Quantitative Summary

Indicator	Observation (Q1)
Patrols conducted	3
# of people encountered Q1	50-60
Individual case forms/surveys completed	9
Main locations	Schuman, European Quarter, Humanitarian Hub, Gare du Midi
Demographic	Predominantly single adult men
Main legal situations	Asylum seekers, Dublin procedure, undocumented migrants
Frequent nationalities encountered	Algeria, Sudan, Somalia, Azerbaijan, Poland, Nigeria (among documented cases)
Most common needs	Shelter, tents, food, legal support, hygiene facilities, healthcare, warm clothing/winter gear.
Main referral organisations	Humanitarian Hub, Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen Legal Helpdesk / Infoline, Samusocial, Doucheflux, Red Cross
Operational observations	Many people had complex or unclear legal situations; several Dublin cases; some individuals were unaware of available services. Many men were not aware of the Fedasil waiting list or how to register on it.
Outreach challenges	Safety concerns around large groups and substance use; difficulty distributing limited relief items fairly; issue if the person had no cellphone / access to internet for follow up or service referral; need for clearer volunteer protocols

Example – Patrol 1 (15/02/2026)

Overview	Encounters (15/02/2026)		
Gender	All: 29	Men: 27	Women: 2
Maalbeek Metro Station	0	0	0
Schuman Metro Station	3	3	0
Rue de la Loi	0	0	0
Agora Simone Veil	4	4	0
Luxembourg Train Station	4	3	1
Porte de Namur Metro Station	18	17	1

3. Contact

Ella Petousis

Coordinator

ella@refugee-committee.org

(+32) 049 537 8076

Umbrella Refugee Committee

Brussels, Belgium

<https://refugee-committee.org/>

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